UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and
Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/S-3/NGO/1
24 May 1994
ENGLISH
Original: ENGLISH/FRENCH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Third special session
24-25 May 1994
Agenda item 3

LETTER DATED 9 MAY 1994 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CANADA TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT GENEVA ADDRESSED TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Written statement submitted by Caritas Internationalis, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (Category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV)

[20 May 1994]

GE.94-12733

STATEMENT ON RWANDA

In the wake of the April 6th killing of the Presidents of Rwanda and Burundi, civil order in Rwanda has deteriorated to a state of anarchy. It is reported that as many as 200,000 Rwandan citizens have been massacred and 1.5 to 2 million people have been displaced, both internally and to neighbouring countries.

The violence and insecurity stem from a power struggle between different political factions which have intentionally exploited and consequently exacerbated traditional ethnic rivalries. The result has been to undermine the peace agreement signed in Arusha in 1993 and to unleash a wave of violence which can only be described as genocide. The violence in Rwanda also threatens to re-ignite similar tensions in neigbouring countries.

Rwanda is in a state of chaos and the surviving population is facing a severe shortage of food due to the drought affecting different regions since a few months.

The international community has the responsibility and duty to stop the killing of innocent civilians in Rwanda and to provide humanitarian assistance to the victims of the conflict.

On behalf of the Caritas Network we call on the Rwandan government soldiers and military authorities, the local militias and the Rwandan Patriotic Front to fully respect the human rights of all Rwandans, to cease the killing of civilians and to negociate an immediate cease fire.

We also call on the United Nations Organization, the Organization of African Unity and on every good will nation, asking them to take the following steps to reinforce the UNO presence, to use their good offices, as they are already doing, to reinitiate dialogue between the parties to the conflict and press the Rwandan interim government, military authorities and the Rwanda Patriotic Front to negociate.

For it is necessary to :

- protect the civilian population from harm,
- protect Rwandan refugees from harm and ensure that asylum seekers can leave the country,
- ensure access for humanitarian assistance.

All parties to the conflict should reaffirm their firm commitment to respect human rights, their commitment to the Arusha agreement, a firm commitment to diplomatic negociations with the support of the international community, conditions for a new mandate for UNAMIR.

With these conditions the humanitarian aid to meet immediate emergency relief and longer-term rehabilitation and reconstruction needs for Rwanda and its populations could be organised and increased.

At the present moment the Caritas Network is active in Rwanda, Tanzania, Burundi and Zaïre.

Bishop Affonso Gregory
President
Caritas Internationalis

Bishop Anselme SANON
Africa Vice-President
Caritas Internationalis